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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-fifth session

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION

Concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Burundi

1. The Committee considered the initial report of Burundi (CRC/C/3/Add.58) at its 645th to 646th meetings (see CRC/C/SR.645 and 646), held on 20 September 2000, and adopted* the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the State party's initial report and the written replies to its list of issues (CRC/C/Q/BUR/1). The Committee notes the constructive dialogue it had with the delegation of the State party.

B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to introduce "education for peace" and "let us build peace" projects into national school curricula and teacher training. The Committee notes also the State party's efforts to provide unaccompanied children with adequate assistance and to help them trace their families.

4. The Committee notes with satisfaction the State party's ratification of ILO Convention No. 138 concerning the minimum age for the admission to employment and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

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* At the 669th meeting, held on 6 October 2000.

C. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Convention

5. The Committee notes that peace negotiations have failed many times in the past and expresses the hope that current efforts will be successful. The Committee is aware that successful negotiations will need some time to take effect and that the armed conflict, with its many repercussions on respect for children's rights, will continue to cause serious human rights violations in the State party.

6. The Committee notes that, since it ratified the Convention, there has been a serious deterioration in the socio-economic conditions in the State party, aggravated by the armed conflict.

7. The Committee notes also the regional sanctions imposed on the State party until 1999 and the negative impact of the sanctions on the situation of children in the State party.

D. Principal subjects of concern, suggestions and recommendations

1. General measures of implementation (arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6, of the Convention)

Legislation

8. The Committee notes the efforts being made by the State party to bring domestic legislation into conformity with the Convention including through new legislation on adoption, children in difficult circumstances and the rights of delinquent children to be considered by the National Assembly at its present session. The Committee remains concerned, however, that plans to adopt a single legal instrument gathering together all provisions relating to the rights and duties of children have not been completed, that not all elements of domestic legislation are in conformity with the provisions of the Convention, and that customary law and traditional practices involving, inter alia, inheritance violate the rights of children, and of girls in particular.

9. The Committee encourages the State party to continue its efforts in the area of law reform with a view to ensuring full conformity with the principles and provisions of the Convention, to pursue early adoption of the code of laws on the rights and duties of children, and to ensure that customary law and traditional practices fully respect the provisions of the Convention. The Committee further recommends that the State party make additional efforts to ensure that legislation is implemented.

National plan of action and child rights policy

10. Noting the progress made towards the establishment at the provincial and communal levels of children's rights committees, the Committee remains concerned at the lack of a comprehensive children's rights policy in the State party, at the absence of policy-making mechanisms which systematically take children's rights into consideration and at the absence of an up-to-date national plan of action for the implementation of a children's rights policy in priority areas. The Committee is concerned, in addition, that children's rights have not been sufficiently taken into consideration in past efforts to achieve peace in the State party.

11. The Committee recommends that a children's rights policy and a new national plan of action based upon the principles and provisions of the Convention be established and implemented in consultation and coordination with all relevant ministries and with civil society. The Committee recommends that the State party pursue efforts to establish provincial and communal child rights committees and that these bodies be used to effectively implement the children's rights policy and programmes related to the national plan of action at the local level. The Committee recommends that the State party seek assistance from UNICEF in this regard. The Committee urges, further, that the protection of child rights and the implementation of programmes to address priority child rights concerns be included in peace agreements.

Coordination

12. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to coordinate implementation of the Convention through the Council of Ministers, the Ministry with responsibility for human rights and the inter-ministerial follow-up Committee. The Committee remains concerned, however, that the efforts to coordinate are insufficient with regard to the promotion and implementation of the Convention and the involvement of NGOs in the process.

13. The Committee recommends that the State party review its coordinating mechanisms in order to facilitate the promotion and implementation of the Convention and ensure that adequate human and financial resources are allocated for this purpose. Further, the Committee recommends that appropriate measures be taken to include NGOs in the coordination process.

Data collection

14. The Committee notes with concern the breakdown of data collection mechanisms and that where data are collected they cover only children up to age 15.

15. The Committee recommends that the State party take steps to improve the collection of disaggregated data, including for children up to age 18, on priority areas of concern within the scope of the Convention and ensure that this information is used to improve the implementation of a child rights policy.

Monitoring mechanisms

16. The Committee is concerned that there is no mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Convention or to report complaints of violations of children's rights.

17. The Committee recommends that an independent mechanism be established to monitor implementation of the Convention and to record and report on violations of children's rights.

Available resources/budgetary allocations

18. In light of article 4 of the Convention, the Committee is deeply concerned at the low proportion of the national budget invested in health, education and social welfare in contravention of the World Bank's guidelines on minimum spending on these areas, and the high proportion of spending on defence. The Committee is also concerned that resources, whether from State allocations or from direct international assistance, are not distributed evenly among the population according to need. Further, the Committee notes the high proportion of the population living in poverty and is concerned at the impact of this situation on children.

19. In light of articles 2, 3 and 4 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party raise the proportion of spending on health, education and social welfare to the maximum of available resources, with a view to ensuring access to these services for all children. The Committee recommends in addition that the State party ensure that resources are distributed as evenly as possible according to the needs of vulnerable populations and to all geographical areas. The Committee recommends further that the State party make every effort to ensure that programmes and services for the implementation of the Convention are maintained.

Involvement of civil society

20. The Committee is concerned that civil society, including NGOs, have insufficient opportunities to influence policy making and implementation with regard to children's rights. The Committee is also concerned that children do not have sufficient opportunities to participate in this process.

21. The Committee recommends that the State party take steps to involve a wide range of NGOs in child rights policy-making and implementation including, in particular, at the provincial and communal levels. The Committee recommends further that children be provided with more opportunities to participate in the work of NGOs.

Training

22. Recognizing the efforts made by the State party to promote the Convention and to provide training on its provisions for civil servants, the Committee is concerned that training on practical application of the Convention, particularly in the context of the developing network of provincial and communal child rights committees, is insufficient.

23. The Committee recommends that the State party continue and strengthen its efforts to promote the Convention and to conduct training on its provisions for particular professional groups including teachers, health professionals, including psychological care specialists, social workers, law enforcement officials, provincial and communal administrative officials, the members of provincial child rights committees and national ministerial officials with responsibility for children's rights, and the military. The Committee recommends further that the State party seek assistance in this regard from UNICEF.

2. Definition of the child (art. 1 of the Convention)

24. The Committee is concerned at the low minimum age of 12 at which formal education is no longer compulsory, and joins with the State party in expressing concern at the difference in the legal minimum ages for marriage of girls and boys, and at the low minimum age of recruitment to the armed forces.

25. The Committee recommends that the State party raise the legal school-leaving age to 16, which is the age at which children are legally permitted to work. The Committee recommends further that the State party pursue its efforts to harmonize the minimum ages for marriage of girls and boys and that legislative measures be taken to raise the minimum age of recruitment to the armed forces to 18.

3. General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12 of the Convention)

Non-discrimination

26. The Committee is deeply concerned at gross violations of the right to be protected from discrimination and at the impact of discrimination upon children in the State party, and notes that discrimination takes different forms including by ethnic origin, gender, geographical origin (within the country) and social status. The Committee notes that killings and other acts committed in the armed conflict, and which have affected children, have frequently been perpetrated on the basis of ethnic origin. The Committee notes in addition that other forms of discrimination lead to concerns with regard to, inter alia, access to resources, inheritance of property, the right to a nationality and the access of girls to education. Further, the Committee is concerned that the State party does not appear to have taken fully into account either the provisions of article 2 or the Convention's other principles in its legislation and administrative and judicial practice as well as in programmes on behalf of children.

27. The Committee urges the State party to make every effort to end all discriminatory practices, to ensure equal respect for the rights of all children in the State party and to reinforce and ensure the implementation of existing laws related to non-discrimination. The Committee recommends that the State party commission and publish an independent study on the different types and causes of discrimination which affect children in the State party, with the aim of contributing to public discussion and the identification of solutions. The Committee urges the State party to restate its commitment to protect children from discrimination and to work with national and international partners to end discrimination. The Committee further urges the State party to use promotion of and training on child rights as a means of ending discrimination and to prosecute persons who violate non-discrimination provisions of the law.

Best interests of the child

28. The Committee is deeply concerned that the State party has not given the best interests of the child, as an individual or as a member of a vulnerable group, priority consideration.

29. The Committee recommends that the principle of the best interests of the child, both as an individual and as a member of a vulnerable group, be integrated into all future revisions of legislation and given due consideration in the context of administrative and judicial decisions.

Right to life, survival and development

30. The Committee is deeply concerned at the extensive violations of the right to life of children by, inter alia, armed conflict, deliberate killings by armed persons including members of the armed forces, State regroupment policies, other forms of population displacement, poor health and sanitation facilities, severe malnutrition and related illnesses, and as a result of the prevailing conflict between groups of the population.

31. The Committee strongly urges the State party to make every effort to reinforce protection of the right to life, survival and development of all children within the State party through policies, programmes and services that target and guarantee protection of this right. The Committee further urges the State party to seek as much international assistance as possible in this regard.

The right of the child to be heard

32. The Committee is concerned that children are not given enough opportunities to express their views and that their opinions are not taken into consideration sufficiently, in particular within the family and in schools.

33. In the light of article 12 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party provide educational information to, inter alia, parents, teachers, government administrative officials, the judiciary and the public in general on children's rights to participate and to have their views taken into consideration.

4. Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7, 8, 13-17 and 37 (a) of the Convention)

Nationality

34. The Committee notes that the State party has ratified the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, but remains concerned at the absence of legislation to implement the Convention's provision, as they affect children.

35. The Committee recommends that the State party consider adopting and implementing legislation to implement the 1954 Convention.

Birth registration

36. The Committee is very concerned at the large numbers of children whose birth is not being registered.

37. In the light of article 7 of the Convention, the Committee urges the State party to make every effort to ensure the registration of all children born, taking into account the particular situation of internally displaced persons, including those who have been regrouped, and refugees.

Cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment

38. The Committee is deeply concerned at severe violations of the rights to freedom of movement and to choose one's residence in the context of the State party's regroupment policy. The Committee is concerned further by the large number of children in regroupment camps and the extremely poor conditions in which they have to live, constituting, in many cases, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and violating numerous minimum standards with respect to children's rights.

39. The Committee urges the State party to complete, without further delay, the process of closing the regroupment camps and, pending closure, to guarantee respect of all the civil rights and freedoms of children and their families living in such camps.

Corporal punishment

40. The Committee is concerned that corporal punishment continues to be practised at home and in some schools and that domestic legislation does not prohibit its use.

41. The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures, including legislation, information campaigns and the promotion of alternative forms of sanctions which respect the physical and mental integrity of children, to end corporal punishment within the family, schools, juvenile justice and alternative care.

The protection of the law

42. The Committee is concerned that violations of human rights, including in particular the killing of civilians, committed against children or their parents are only rarely addressed through judicial processes and that this climate of impunity is detrimental to the overall respect of children's rights.

43. The Committee recommends that the State party make much greater efforts to investigate violations of human rights and to prosecute the perpetrators of these acts.

Access to information

44. The Committee notes with concern that a majority of children in rural areas do not have adequate access to information.

45. In light of article 17, the Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to ensure that children in all rural areas are provided with adequate access to information and that they are also protected from information which may be harmful to them.

5. Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5; 18 (paras. 1-2); 9-11; 19-21; 25; 27 (para. 4); and 39 of the Convention)

Family support

46. The Committee is deeply concerned at the breakdown in nuclear family structures, at the emergence of a high proportion of single-parent-headed households, child-headed households and grandparent-headed households, and at the immediate and long-term consequences that these weaknesses in the family structure may have on children. The Committee is also concerned at the strong bias in favour of fathers in the context of child custody disputes.

47. Noting the efforts already made in this regard, the Committee urges the State party to continue and strengthen support to families, including through assistance with agricultural production and legal and financial assistance in obtaining adequate housing and land and counselling to help resolve problems. The Committee urges the State party to give particular attention to the establishment of psycho-social and parental guidance programmes to strengthen vulnerable family units such as single-parent-, child- and grandparent-headed households. The Committee recommends in addition that the State party ensure that in granting one parent custody of a child the decision is made in accordance with the best interests of the child, with the child's participation and with consideration for the emotional needs of the child.

Child abuse and neglect

48. The Committee joins the State party in expressing concern at acts of cruelty, ill-treatment, abuse, including sexual abuse, and neglect and practices such as the seizure of property belonging to orphans which are committed against children in the context of the family, including the extended family.

49. In light of article 19, the Committee recommends that the State party take steps to establish effective mechanisms for the timely reporting of and response to domestic violence and abuse against or affecting children, to prosecute individuals who violate criminal law and to protect children from cruelty and other harmful acts such as the seizure of property from orphans. The Committee recommends further that the State party take measures to offer both physical and psychological care to those who have suffered, including assisting child victims through court and other proceedings and avoiding the risk of secondary victimization, and that these should be implemented in accordance with article 39 of the Convention.

Alternative care

50. Recognizing the large numbers of orphans and other children in need of alternative care in the State party, the Committee is deeply concerned at violations of child rights that occur in the context of alternative care at the lack of systematic monitoring of the situation of children in institutions or informal foster families, at the use of children for labour in some informal foster families and at reports indicating that many of these children do not have adequate emotional support or access to health and education services.

51. In light of article 21 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party urgently develop, and implement, mechanisms to ensure the provision of suitable alternative care for children in need of such assistance and that monitoring mechanisms be established to guarantee a minimum standard of care, including in the long-term, and which ensure that such children are not used for labour and have access to education and health services. The Committee recommends further that a code of standards be adopted on care and protection of children deprived of a family environment. Recognizing the difficulties encountered by many families that provide alternative care for children, the Committee recommends that the State party continue and strengthen its support to such families, including by providing assistance to pay for health and education services.

6. Basic health and welfare
(arts. 6; 18, para. 3; 23; 24; 26; 27, paras 1-3 of the Convention)

Children with disabilities

52. Noting the current efforts by the State party, the Committee is concerned at the situation of children with physical and mental disabilities, and in particular at the limited specialized health care, education and employment possibilities available for them. The Committee is concerned further that poor health conditions and poverty are leading to an increase in the number of children with disabilities.

53. The Committee recommends that the State party review the situation of children with disabilities in terms of their access to suitable health care, education services and employment opportunities and that the State party establish a programme of action to address all areas of concern. The Committee recommends in addition that the State party take note of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (General Assembly resolution 48/96) and the Committee's recommendations adopted at its day of general discussion on "The rights of children with disabilities" (see CRC/C/69). The Committee further recommends that the State party sensitize the population to the rights of children with disabilities and the difficulties they must face in their daily lives. The Committee also suggests that the State party seek assistance from, inter alia, UNICEF and WHO.

Poor health and access to primary health care

54. The Committee is deeply concerned at low immunization rate, high levels of malnutrition and micro-nutrition deficiencies and extremely poor health conditions among children in general and particularly in camps. Further, the Committee is concerned at high mortality rates among children, high maternal mortality rates, at low investment in health care, the limited number of hospitals and health centres that are operational, the limited drug supply and relatively high cost of medicines, including generic drugs, and the concentration of medical professionals in Bujumbura city.

55. The Committee urges the State party to make significant increases in the health budget, to make every effort to improve public health, including primary health care, and to ensure adequate access for all children to health services, with particular regard to those living in rural communities and in camps. The Committee recommends that the State party implement integrated policies and programmes for the management of childhood illnesses and measures to improve child and maternal health. The Committee recommends that the State party seek the assistance of UNICEF and WHO in this regard.

56. The Committee is concerned at the lack of a comprehensive policy regarding the protection of social welfare, and that such protection is not equally accessible to the children of parents who are not employed in the civil service.

57. In light of article 26 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to extend the protection of social welfare to all sectors of the population, including through systems such as the health insurance card.

Adolescent health

58. The Committee is concerned at the lack of an adolescent health care policy, particularly with regard to reproductive health, early teenage pregnancy, mental health and problems related to the inhaling of substances such as glue and petrol and the use of marijuana.

59. The Committee recommends that the State party make additional efforts to develop a comprehensive adolescent health care policy and to provide reproductive health education and specialized assistance for the treatment of mental, reproductive and other health concerns of adolescents. In this context, the Committee recommends that the State party seek assistance from UNICEF and WHO.

HIV/AIDS

60. The Committee is deeply concerned at the high incidence of HIV/AIDS in the State party and its impact, either direct or indirect, on children and adolescents.

61. Noting the efforts made in this regard, including the national programme to combat HIV/AIDS, the Committee recommends that the State party pursue and increase its

current efforts to promote awareness and prevention of HIV/AIDS [xxx Note: reference to discussion day to be included here]. The Committee recommends that the State party seek assistance in this regard from UNAIDS, UNICEF and WHO.

Psychological care

62. Noting the current efforts to address trauma, the Committee is concerned at the inadequacy of specialized psychological care in almost all regions of the State party and the substantial need for such assistance among children who have suffered from, inter alia, the ongoing armed conflict, displacement, regroupment, sexual abuse and living conditions in camps. The Committee is concerned that the current ratio of mental health workers to population is very low.

63. The Committee recommends that the State party increase its efforts to make psychological assistance available to those children who have experienced trauma and to increase human resources in the area of psychological care by providing specialized mental health training for existing health professionals. The Committee urges the State party to seek assistance from UNICEF and WHO in this regard.

7. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28, 29, 31 of the Convention)

Education

64. The Committee is very concerned at the dramatic fall in the number of children attending primary and secondary school in the State party, at the insufficient number of qualified teachers working in rural communities and in camps, at the lack of adequate teaching equipment and at repeated attacks by armed persons on schools. The Committee is further concerned at the limited access of children with disabilities to formal or vocational educational opportunities and at the proportionally low number of girls attending primary or secondary school.

65. The Committee urges the State party to continue and strengthen its efforts to, inter alia, rebuild and reopen schools, recruit qualified teachers in those areas where they are needed, make available adequate teaching equipment and ensure that all children, including indigent and displaced children, have equal access to education opportunities. The Committee further recommends that the State party develop a clear programme of action for increasing children's access to formal education. The Committee recommends in addition that the State party ensure that children with disabilities have access to formal and vocational educational opportunities and that every effort be made to ensure that girls and boys have equal access to educational opportunities. In this regard, the Committee recommends that the State party seek assistance from UNICEF and UNESCO.

66. The Committee recommends, in addition, that the State party pursue its efforts to include "education for peace", children's rights and other human rights subjects in the curricula of primary and secondary schools, and that assistance be requested from UNICEF and UNESCO in this regard.

8. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 38, 39, 40, 37 (b)-(d), 32-36 of the Convention)

Refugees and internally displaced children

67. The Committee is deeply concerned at the very large numbers of persons who have become refugees or internally displaced within the country and at the situation of those displaced children who are unaccompanied. The Committee is disturbed in particular by the massive numbers of people who been forcibly regrouped within the country and by the very poor, sometimes life-threatening conditions in displaced and regrouped persons camps, and the poor health and education services available to camp populations. The Committee notes that the State party has publicly promised to end the regroupment policy, but has failed to do so. The Committee notes further that efforts to trace the families of unaccompanied children have had limited success.

68. The Committee urges the State party to make every effort to protect the civilian population from displacement and to implement its plans to end regroupment, giving particular attention to the situation of unaccompanied children and the need for effective family tracing. The Committee further urges the State party to ensure that all displaced children and their families, including those who have been regrouped, have access to essential health and education services and to consider the need for continued access to such services during the often slow process of return to communities of origin. The Committee also urges the State party to provide returning children and their families with assistance in re-establishing themselves in their homes. In addition, the Committee urges the State party to continue to work closely with UNHCR towards establishing conditions conducive to the return of refugees in safety and in the context of a durable solution.

Children living and working on the streets or in the hills

69. The Committee is concerned at the situation of children living and working on the streets and children living on their own and without proper housing in the hills. The Committee is concerned, inter alia, about the poor access of such children to health, education and other services, about reports that the number of children living or working on the streets is continuing to increase, and about the particular vulnerability of girls in these situations.

70. The Committee recommends that the State party reinforce the current efforts on behalf of street and "hill" children and ensure that these children are protected and have access to health and education services. Taking into consideration the limited availability of social workers and the scarcity of resources, the Committee recommends that the State party give greater support to the work of NGOs in this domain and provide the police services with training on children's rights so that the police can contribute to the protection of children from acts of violence or other abuse while on the street. The Committee recommends that special attention be given to improving the situation of girls. The Committee recommends further that the State party seek assistance from UNICEF in this regard.

Children in armed conflict

71. The Committee is concerned about the participation of children in the State party's armed forces, either as soldiers, or as helpers in camps or in the obtaining of information. The Committee is also concerned about reports of widespread recruitment of children by opposition armed forces. The Committee is further concerned at reports of sexual exploitation of children by members of the armed forces. The Committee is deeply concerned about violations of the provisions of international humanitarian law relating to the treatment of civilians in armed conflict.

72. The Committee urges the State party to end the use of children as soldiers or in any other way related to the armed conflict and to demand, in the context of peace negotiations, that opposition armed forces also cease to use children as soldiers. The Committee recommends that the State party ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts at the earliest opportunity. In addition, the Committee urges the State party to ensure that the sexual exploitation of children by members of the armed forces is brought to an end and that the perpetrators are prosecuted. The Committee recommends further that the State party provide demobilized children, and others who have been linked to armed forces or groups, with assistance towards their social reintegration. The Committee recommends that full respect of the provisions of international humanitarian law be guaranteed.

Juvenile justice

73. Noting the efforts made to appoint judges for cases involving juveniles, the Committee is concerned at the weakness of juvenile justice facilities in the State party. In particular, the Committee is concerned that children who have been charged with a criminal offence are obliged to wait long periods of time before a trial is held and that the duration of pre-trial detention of children frequently exceeds the maximum prison sentence to which a child can be sentenced if found guilty. Investigations into criminal accusations made against children are extremely slow. In addition, the Committee is concerned that children are usually detained or imprisoned in the same facilities as adults and that conditions of detention are very poor. The Committee is also concerned to learn that children under the established minimum age of criminal responsibility of 13 are frequently detained.

74. The Committee urges the State party to make every effort to ensure that investigations and trials of children accused of committing criminal acts are conducted rapidly, that periods of pre-trial detention are kept to a minimum, that children are detained or imprisoned separately from adults and that conditions of detention are improved. The Committee urges the State party to ensure that no children under the age of 13 are detained or imprisoned, in accordance with domestic legislation. The Committee recommends that the State party make further efforts to ensure that the Convention is implemented and respected, in particular articles 37, 40 and 39, along with other United Nations standards in the field of juvenile justice, including the United Nations

Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules), the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines) and the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty.

Sexual exploitation

75. The Committee is concerned that children have been the victims of sexual exploitation, sometimes by those persons who are responsible for their care.

76. The Committee recommends that the State party make every effort to end and prevent the sexual exploitation or abuse of children, giving particular attention to children living in camps. The Committee recommends in particular that the State party develop and implement a multidisciplinary plan of action to address the sexual exploitation of children and encourages the State party, in its efforts to address commercial sexual exploitation, to take into account the recommendations formulated in the Agenda for Action adopted at the World Congress Against Commercial Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm in 1996. The Committee also recommends that the State party consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Minorities

77. The Committee is deeply concerned about the poor situation of Batwa children and the lack of respect for almost all of their rights, including the rights to health care, to education, to survival and development, to a culture and to be protected from discrimination.

78. The Committee urges the State party urgently to gather additional information on the Batwa people, to strengthen the representation of Batwa in national policy-making and to elaborate a plan of action to protect the rights of Batwa children, including those rights related to minority populations and indigenous peoples.

Dissemination of the report, written answers, concluding observations

79. Finally, in light of article 44, paragraph 6, of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the initial report and written replies submitted by the State party be made widely available to the public at large and that the publication of the report be considered, along with the relevant summary records and concluding observations adopted thereon by the Committee. Such a document should be widely distributed in order to generate debate and awareness of the Convention, its implementation and monitoring within the Government, the Parliament and the general public, including concerned non-governmental organizations. The Committee recommends that the State party request international cooperation in this regard.